MARVEL

HEROES FOR HIRE®

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

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HEROES FOR HIRE

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

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#6

DIAMOND DISTRICT, NEW YORK CITY

GARBAGE STRIKES, TERRORIST ATTACKS, BLACKOUTS...

YOU'D THINK PEOPLE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS PLACE ALREADY AND STAY HOME.

BUT TOURISTS STILL COME IN BY THE BUSLOAD FORTY TIMES A DAY AND MORE PEOPLE ARE MOVING HERE THAN EVER BEFORE.

HATE THIS CITY, MAN.

JEEZ, WHY DON'T YOU JUST MOVE?

I HATE CHANGE.

YOU HATE *EVERYTHING.*

BIKE MESSENGERS MOST OF ALL.

KRRRRRNK

WHAT THE HELL?

HOLY...!

THESE EXO-SKELETONS ARE THE @#$%! LOOK WHAT I CAN DO!

LET'S MOVE IT BEFORE SPIDER-MAN OR SOMEBODY ELSE SHOWS UP!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE THE *DEATH CADRE!* DON'T CAUSE NO FUSS, WON'T BE NO FUSS.

BOOM!

THOOM!

FSSSSHM

VWEEOOOWWEEOOOWWEEOOOWW

NYPD

COMPANY!

GET THESE CIVILIANS OUT OF HERE!

I THOUGHT REGISTRATION WAS GOING TO CUT *DOWN* ON SUPER CRIME! WE NEED S.H.I.E.L.D. BACKUP!

Precious STONES

KING DIAMOND

POLICE

NYPD

KRBLOOM!

MOVE!

THIS IS SO COOL!

AS SOON AS WE'RE ONBOARD, PUT IN A CALL TO THE FENCE! I WANT THESE ROCKS TURNED TO CASH ASAP!

CALLING.

HEY, IS THAT SPIDER-MAN DOWN THERE...?

WILL YOU SHUT UP ABOUT SPIDER-MAN?

Guns, Gems, Robots and TERRORISTS!

HEROES FOR HIRE HEADQUARTERS, IN THE HEART OF CHINATOWN

SUPER-VILLAINS STOLE MY ROBOT.

THIS IS A JOKE, RIGHT? PLEASE TELL ME IT'S A JOKE.
LET THE KID TALK, HUMBUG.
WE WERE IN OUR SECRET PLACE AND I WAS UPGRADING MY ROBOT'S AUDIO SYSTEM WHEN I HEARD VOICES.
THERE WAS A FUNNY SMELL SO I WENT TO SEE IF IT WAS UNCLE JOE, A BUM THAT LIKES TO SLEEP THERE.
UNCLE JOE SMELLS LIKE PEE BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT.
PLEASANT.
HONEY, WHERE IS THIS PLACE?
BY THE WEST SIDE HIGHWAY OVERPASSES... WHERE ALL THE BUMS LIVE.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HANGING OUT THERE, KID.
I KNOW, BUT MY ROBOT SCARES PEOPLE AWAY. HE'S SO COOL LIKE THAT.
ANYWAY, I SNUCK AROUND TO SEE WHO WAS IN OUR SECRET PLACE AND I SAW ONE GUY WHO WAS ALL HAIRY EXCEPT FOR HIS HEAD. LIKE, I DUNNO, HALF MONSTER OR SOMETHING.
HE WAS PRETTY SCARY, SO I DECIDED I BETTER GET VIC OUT OF THERE.
VIC...THAT'S YOUR ROBOT'S NAME?
YEAH. WELL...I WAS CALLING HIM KILL-BOT SIX, BUT HE KEPT SAYING HIS NAME WAS VICTOR. HE WAS REALLY BEAT UP WHEN I FOUND HIM.
I DON'T KNOW WHY ANYONE WOULD THROW AWAY A ROBOT, DO YOU?
NO. CAN WE GET ON WITH THIS?
I HEADED BACK TO VICTOR AND I SAW THIS LADY...WELL, SHE HAD A LADY'S BODY, BUT HER HEAD WAS JUST LIKE A GUMBALL.
I CALL HER GUMBALL-HEAD LADY.
THAT'S CUTE. SO WHAT DID GUMBALL-HEAD LADY DO?
SHE WAS WITH THIS OTHER GUY I CALL MISTER WRINKLES, ON ACCOUNT OF HIM BEING ALL...
WRINKLY!

WE GET IT, KID. MISTER WRINKLES... BRILLIANT.

YOU GOT SOMETHING AGAINST KIDS?

HEY ORKA, *SOME* OF US DON'T LAY THREE MILLION EGGS IN THE SPRING.

DON'T START WITH ME, BUG BOY.

IGNORE HIM, KID.

OKAY.

ANYWAY, THEY SAW VICTOR AND GOT REALLY EXCITED. I WAS REALLY SCARED, BUT VICTOR IS MY BEST FRIEND AND I COULDN'T LET THEM DO ANYTHING TO HIM, SO I TRIED TO STOP THEM.

THE HAIRY MAN PUSHED ME DOWN ON THE GROUND AND TOLD ME TO GO AWAY FOREVER. HE SAID VICTOR WAS HIS ROBOT NOW AND IF I WANTED TO LIVE I'D BETTER LEAVE.

ROUGHIN' UP KIDS...

I SAY WE TAKE THE CASE.

HE COULD BE MAKING IT ALL UP. THAT'S WHAT KIDS DO... THEY MAKE UP STORIES SO THAT PEOPLE PAY ATTENTION TO THEM.

I USED TO DO IT ALL THE TIME!

"ANY CASE BIG OR SMALL." THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS ON THE BUSINESS CARD.

I'M GOING BACK TO MY NEW PIMPED-OUT ROOM TO PLAY ONLINE GAMES WITH FOULMOUTHED RACIST KIDS. CALL ME WHEN THERE'S A TANGIBLE ASSIGNMENT.

HUMBUG, THE KIDNAPPED ROBOT'S YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY.

WHAT??

GO WITH BILLY AND CHECK OUT HIS STORY. IF YOU RUN INTO TROUBLE, CONTACT US.

MISTY, THERE IS NO WAY I'M...

37 SECONDS LATER.

RASHEM FRASHEM...

PARDON ME, I'M LOOKING FOR MISTY KNIGHT AND COLLEEN WING.

END OF THE HALLWAY. YOU LOOKING TO HIRE A HERO?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

I HIRED THIS GUY, MISTER. HE WORKS FOR ME.

JUST SMILE... MUST...NOT... KILL...

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.

GOOD AFTERNOON, LADIES AND...

WHO ARE YOU?

LOUIS "SHADOWS" KRAVITS, MUSCLE FOR THE 47TH STREET MAFIA. HOW'S ETHEL THESE DAYS?

AH, SHE IS WITH GOD NOW, BUT THANK YOU FOR ASKING.

I HAVE NEED OF YOUR SERVICES.

YOU KNOW WE DON'T DO CONTRACT KILLINGS, SHADOWS.

IS HE RELATED TO LENNY KRAVITZ?

SHUT IT, OTIS.

NO KILLING IS REQUIRED, MISS WING. MAY WE TALK?

WHY D'YOU LOOK LIKE A BUG? IS IT COMFORTABLE?

HMBUGGY

I LIKE YOUR CAR. WHAT KIND OF CAR IS A GREMLIN? DID YOU PICK OUT THE COLOR? DOES IT HAVE AN ENGINE OR IS THERE A REAL GREMLIN INSIDE?

I DON'T LIKE CHRISTMAS. DO YOU?

WHAT?

CHRISTMAS. YOU DON'T LIKE IT, RIGHT?

I LIKE CHRISTMAS.

THEN WHY DID THEY CALL YOU HUMBUG?

OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
I TALK TO BUGS.
THAT'S SO COOL! I WISH I COULD TALK TO BUGS!
SO BUGS ARE YOUR BEST FRIENDS? LIKE ME AND VICTOR?
I GUESS SO.
VICTOR IS THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ME.
DO YOU HAVE A BEST BUG FRIEND, OR ARE THEY ALL--
STOP TALKING!
VICTOR SAYS I'M VERY BRIGHT AND GOOD WITH MACHINES. HE WAS PRETTY BEAT UP WHEN I FOUND HIM. IT TOOK A WHILE TO GET HIS VOICE WORKING, BUT WHEN I DID HE TOLD ME ALL KINDS OF THINGS.
GOOD FOR YOU.
VICTOR SAYS ONE DAY I COULD RULE THE WORLD JUST WITH MY BRAINS AND INVENTIONS. DO YOU BELIEVE I COULD RULE THE WORLD, MR. HUMBUG?
TRUST ME; YOU DON'T WANT TO RULE THE WORLD. IT AIN'T WORTH THE EFFORT.
REALLY? OKAY.
I HAVE TO GO TO THE BATHROOM NOW.

THREE ROBBERIES IN THE DIAMOND DISTRICT THIS MONTH. THE CASUALTIES ARE...UNFORGIVABLE.

INNOCENT BYSTANDERS, TOURISTS AND SOME FINE FAMILY MEN...

MY NORMAL METHODS OF DEALING WITH THIS KIND OF SCUM AREN'T EFFECTIVE WITH SUCH A LARGE POLICE PRESENCE IN THE AREA. MY HANDS ARE TIED AGAINST SUCH TIGHT SCRUTINY.

YOU'RE AN ENFORCER, LOUIS.

MISS KNIGHT, I AM A SECURITY AGENT FOR THE DISTRICT. I DO NOT KILL PEOPLE; OTHERWISE THESE THIEVES WOULD BE DEAD, SINCE I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

WHY NOT CALL THE COPS?

MY REPUTATION IS BEING TARNISHED. I'D LIKE TO ASSURE MY CLIENTS THAT I CAN PROTECT THEM WITHOUT POLICE INTERVENTION. SENDING YOU COVERTLY WORKS IN MY FAVOR.

HMM...IT MIGHT BEHOOVE US TO TAKE A PAYING JOB FROM TIME TO TIME.

GOOD POINT, SHANG.

I HEARD THESE THIEVES WERE WEARING SOME KIND OF SUPER SKELETONS. YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

I'VE HEARD THERE'S A NEW ARMS DEALER IN TOWN...SOMEONE BRINGING IN EXOTICS FROM OVERSEAS.

YOU MIGHT QUESTION THESE THIEVES AS TO WHERE THEY OBTAINED THEIR TECHNOLOGY.

I'M DOWN WITH THIS.

OKAY, LOUIS, WE'LL GET THEM, BUT IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE SOME KIND OF SETUP, THEN YOU KNOW WHERE WE'LL COME KNOCKING NEXT.

TZETEH' LESHALOM VESHUVEH' LESHALOM.

"GO IN PEACE AND RETURN IN PEACE."

NOT RULE THE WORLD LIKE A SUPER-VILLAIN SO MUCH. MORE LIKE BILL GATES, YOU KNOW? HE'S GOT ALL THE MONEY AND POWER REALLY...HE CONTROLS VIDEO GAMES AND STUFF.

I CAN'T BELIEVE MISTY SENT ME ON THIS STUPID MISSION.

THERE'S LOTS OF BUGS IN HERE. CAN YOU TALK TO THEM?

I'M TALKING TO THEM RIGHT NOW, KID. SHUT UP.

MEEP!

YOU ARE?

WITH MY BRAIN. YES. STOP INTERRUPTING.

THAT IS SUPER COOL, MISTER HUMBUG. WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND?

NO.

WELL, THAT'S NOT NICE. WHY DON'T YOU LIKE KIDS?

THEY ASK TOO MANY DAMN QUESTIONS THAT I DON'T WANT TO ANSWER. BE QUIET, THE ROACHES ARE TRYING TO TELL ME SOME...

SNAP!

WHO DARES ENTER MY DOMAIN UNINVITED?

PREPARE TO BE DESTROYED BY THE MIGHTY POWER OF *DOCTOR DOOM!*

AND THE HEADMEN! DON'T FORGET TO SAY *HEADMEN!*

I LOVE YOU

OH MAN...

VICTOR!

SO YOU'RE BANNED FROM MATCHMAKING FOR LIFE?

I'M NOT BANNED...HOTLUVER300, MY OLD TAG, IS BANNED. I'M HOTLUVER4001 NOW.

SUPER JUMPS?

MY COUSIN OUT IN WISCONSIN DID THIS HACXORZ JOB ON MY 360, IT WAS SWEET, MAN.

YEAH, MAN... ALL THAT AND MORE...TOTALLY SWEET.

KNOCK KNOCK

THAT THE FENCE?

TOO EARLY. HE AIN'T SUPPOSED TO BE HERE FOR ANOTHER HOUR.

MY PEEPS! WHAT'S HAPPENING UP IN... HERE?

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

DOES NOT THE ODIFEROUS WAFT OF FRESH PIZZA GIVE ME AWAY? PERHAPS THIS FINE UNIFORM OF STANDARD ISSUE AT *PIZZA UNIVERSE* MAKES THINGS CLEARER? TWO-FOR-ONE HELP JOLT YOUR RECOLLECTION SOME?

WE DIDN'T ORDER A PIZZA.

CORRECT, YOU ORDERED THE TWO-PIZZA SPECIAL.

ONE WITH EVERYTHING, AND ONE WITH ANCHOVIES AND PINEAPPLE, WHICH IF I MAY SAY IS QUITE DISGUSTING AN ASSEMBLAGE, UNLESS YOU ORIGINATE FROM THE WEST COAST.

LOOK, LITTLE MAN, WE DON'T WANT PIZZA! GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

HEY, I COULD GO FOR SOME PIZZA. HOW MUCH IS THAT?

NO @#%*#$! PIZZA!

NO NEED FOR VIOLENCE, JUST SMELL THE PIZZA, BOYS AND GIRLS!

COUGH KILL HIM! *COUGH*

CRASH!!

EVERYBODY DOWN ON THE FLOOR ***NOW!***

ALL OF YOUR LEAPING ABOUT HAS GROWN TIRESOME! DOOM HAS NO TIME FOR PETTY GAMES WITH INSIGNIFICANT HUMANS.

WAIT BEFORE YOU KILL HIM, DOCTOR DOOM. HE MAY BE OF SOME USE TO US.

YOU DO NOT ORDER ME ABOUT, MONKEY BOY. I AM NEITHER GALLANT NOR SPORTING. I HAVE A SUPER WEAPON AND I WILL USE IT EARLY AND OFTEN.

UH... WHAT?

VICTOR, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HUMBUG IS OUR FRIEND! DON'T HURT HIM!

OVERRIDE IN EFFECT. I WILL NOT FORM A NURTURING RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ADORABLE CHILD BECAUSE IT INVARIABLY LEADS TO EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT.

WHAT?

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR PET ROBOT'S NEW PROGRAMMING?

EXCELLENT WORK ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, RUBY THURSDAY.

YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

THE KID'S GOT A POINT...

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

UH, CHONDU... USE MAGIC TO STOP THE INSECTS PLEASE!

I NEED ARMS TO PERFORM MAGIC, YOU FUR-COVERED CRETIN!

BILLY, WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!
I'M NOT LEAVING WITHOUT VICTOR!
VICTOR'S A DOOMBOT! YOU *HAD* TO BE AWARE OF THAT!
I CHANGED HIM. I MADE HIM NICE, BUT THEY MADE HIM MEAN AND CONFUSED AGAIN!
PEST PROGRAM IN EFFECT.
I WILL NOT HATCH ANY PLAN WHOSE FINAL OUTCOME IS INCREDIBLY COMPLICATED!
KID, THESE GUYS ARE CALLED THE HEADMEN, AND WHILE INCREDIBLY FREAKISH AND SOMEWHAT RIDICULOUS, THEY'RE VERY GOOD AT WHAT THEY DO!
WHAT DO THEY DO?
RUBY THURSDAY CAN DO ALL MANNER OF INCREDIBLE THINGS!
LIKE HURLING TRANS-DIMENSIONAL PLASMIC GLUE FROM MY PLASTIC COMPUTER HEAD!
WE ALSO HAVE WONDERFUL SUCCESS WITH HEAD TRANSPLANTS.
GREAT.

I THINK I'LL ATTACH YOUR HEAD TO THE BODY OF A MEDIUM-SIZED DOG AND LOCK YOU IN A KENNEL. CHONDU COULD USE YOUR BODY.

LET THE KID GO, CHIMP! HE DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS.

I WILL NOT ALLOW ANY SMALL CHILDREN TO ESCAPE SO THEY CAN WARN OTHERS OF MY NEFARIOUS PLANS. I WAS NOT ASSEMBLED YESTERDAY, YOU KNOW.

DOCTOR DOOM, BRING THE BOY WITH US. HIS SNOOPING HAS UNCOVERED OUR SECRET LABORATORY AND I DON'T WANT ANY MORE UNWELCOME GUESTS.

DO NOT SPEAK SO INSOLENTLY TO DOOM.

VICTOR, STOP THIS! YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND IN THE WHOLE WORLD.

I'M GONNA PUKE IF THAT KID DOESN'T SHUT UP.

I WASN'T AWARE YOU COULD VOMIT.

LOOKING AT YOU, I'M SURPRISED I DON'T DO IT ON A DAILY BASIS.

THIS FROM A WOMAN WITH THE BODY OF A PORN STAR AND A BLOW-POP FOR A HEAD.

SERIOUSLY, YOU GUYS! THIS ISN'T COOL.

LET THE KID GO!

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN.

OWWWWW, I TOLD YOU I DON'T KNOW THE GUY. WE SHOWED UP, PAID OUR MONEY AND PICKED UP THE WEAPONS.

YOU SEE THE WAY TARANTULA IS LOOKING AT YOU? THAT LOOK MEANS SHE'S HUNGRY FOR BLOOD...

HONEST TO GOD! I AM NOT LYIN'!

IT APPEARS TO BE DESERTED.

WAY TO STATE THE OBVIOUS.

APPEARANCES IN THIS CASE ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO A SUCCESSFUL MISSION.

SHANG'S RIGHT. I DON'T LIKE THIS. NO ONE IS AROUND AFTER MIDNIGHT...NOT EVEN A WATCHMAN?

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO CUT SOMETHING OFF OF OUR HOSTAGE. HMMM, WHERE TO START. YOU A RIGHTY OR A LEFTY?

HOLD UP.

WHAT'S THIS?

THIS...IS A BOMB.

A VERY LARGE BOMB, DESIGNED TO STIR UP FEAR AND TERROR IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK... AND CREATE A SIZABLE HOLE THAT WILL BE RADIOACTIVE FOR THE NEXT 200 YEARS.

HELLO, MISTY AND COLLEEN. WHERE'S CAGE AND IRON FIST?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, MAN-APE.

I KNOW GRIM REAPER, BUT I DIDN'T CATCH YOUR NAME, HONEY.

NOT THAT IT MATTERS, BUT THE NAME'S SABOTEUR.

DID SHADOWS SET US UP?

I THINK IT'S MORE A CASE OF BEING IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME.

I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU GUYS, NOT US.

OTIS, COME IN OTIS. TRACK MY SIGNAL AND SEND BACKUP NOW!

SO YOU PLAN TO BLOW SOMETHING UP. HOW ORIGINAL.

THAT TROUBLED CHILDHOOD MUST BE TOUGH TO GET OVER.

CALL ANYONE YOU LIKE, MISS KNIGHT. NO ONE WILL GET HERE IN TIME.

UMM, GUYS...?

SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!

SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!

SABOTEUR, GET TO THE WHEELHOUSE AND SET OUR COURSE. MAN-APE, MAKE SURE ALL THE HATCHES ARE CLOSED AND SEALED.

BY DAWN, AMERICA WILL HAVE A NEW TERRORIST THREAT ON ITS HANDS AND ONE LESS MONUMENT.

#7

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN. INSIDE A CARGO SHIP.

THIS BOMB'S HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED.

WHICH MEANS?

WE NEED THE PROPER TOOLS AND A BOATLOAD OF TIME.

NEITHER OF WHICH WE HAVE.

YOU GUYS KEEP WORKING ON THIS, I'M HEADING TOP-SIDE.

OTIS, WHERE THE HELL IS OUR BACKUP?

SHHAG!

AWRIGHT, WHERE THE HELL ARE--

OHHH...

#@$* ME.

ATTENTION!

U.S. COAST GUARD

YOU ARE ENTERING RESTRICTED WATERS!

SHUT DOWN YOUR ENGINES AND PREPARE TO BE BOARDED IMMEDIATELY!

OTIS, WHERE IN HELL IS OUR BACKUP?!

HANG TIGHT, MISTY.

...CAVALRY'S ON ITS WAY.

YES, MA'AM?

ORKA!

YOU'RE THE BEST WE CAN DO IN TERMS OF BACKUP?

YOU HIRED ME.

LISTEN, WE'RE ON A BOAT WITH A MASSIVE BOMB ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE STATUE OF LIBERTY. COAST GUARD AND HOMELAND SECURITY ARE ABOUT TO ATTACK US...

SUGGESTIONS?

I DON'T REMEMBER THE WORDS "DEMOLITIONS EXPERT" ON YOUR RESUMÉ.

I DON'T APPRECIATE THE SARCASM, BOSS.

GET UP TO THE WHEELHOUSE AND SHUT DOWN THE ENGINE.

I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE BOMB.

GET THE BOMB.

SPLASH!

DON'T JIGGLE IT.

I'M *NOT* JIGGLING.

ATTEMPT NOT TO SNEEZE.

AND DO *NOT* USE THAT BOMB TO BLOW UP ATLANTIS.

WOULD I DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

YES!

CAN I GO NOW, OR WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO LEAVE THE BOMB HERE?

YOU HAVE *GOT* TO BE--

SPLOOSH!

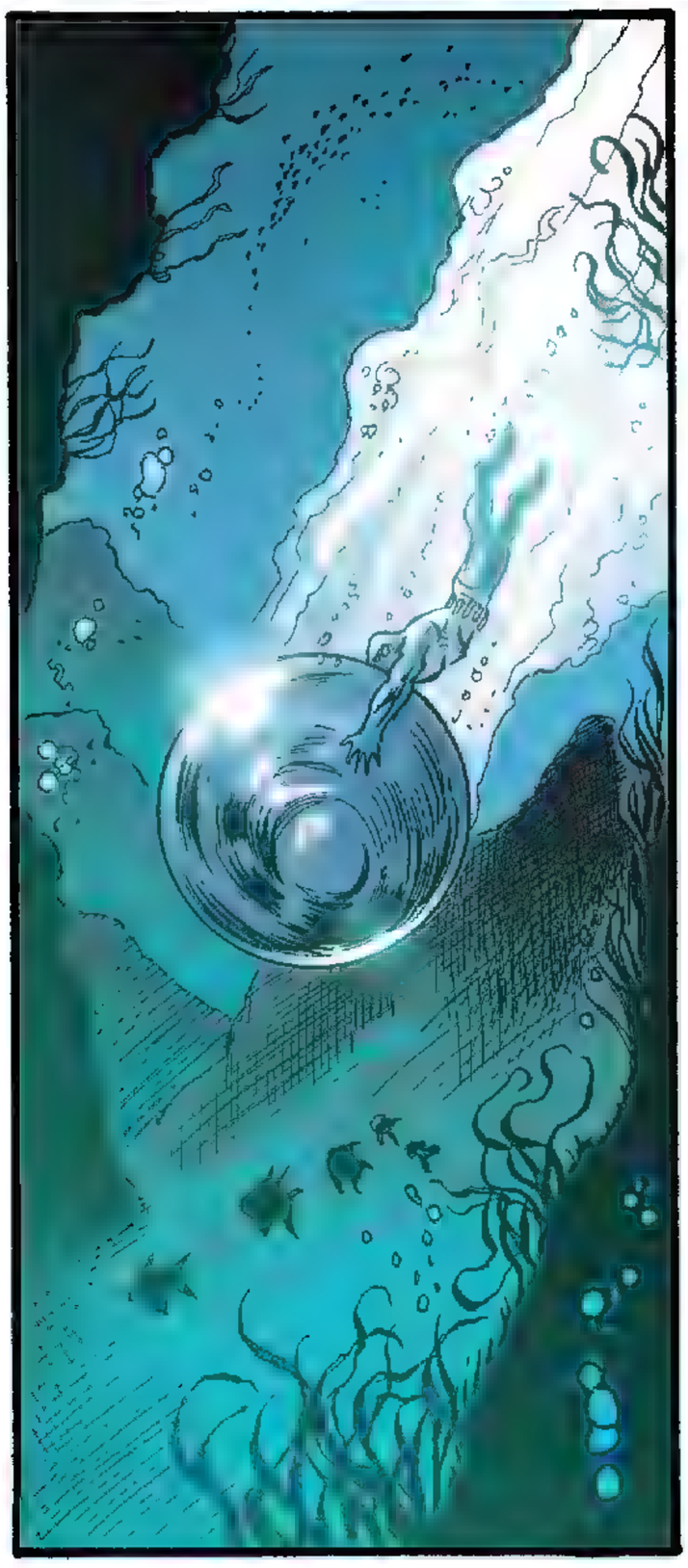
HOW ARE WE GOING TO EXPLAIN THIS?

THEY'RE SAILORS. JUST LOOK CUTE.

COLLEEN, THAT MAY NOT WORK FOR ALL OF US.

THEY *ARE* SAILORS, SHANG.

EVERYONE JUST BE COOL.



GENTLEMEN, I'M MISTY KNIGHT AND WE'RE *HEROES FOR HIRE.* THERE'S NO CAUSE FOR ALARM... YOU CAN LOWER YOUR WEAPONS.

SHUT IT AND GET DOWN ON THE DECK, NOW!

SHUT IT? DUDES, WE'RE REGISTERED WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

WE JUST AVERTED A NATIONAL TRAGEDY.

OKAY, EVERYTHING CHECKS...SO WHAT HAPPENED?

DON'T LAUGH.

GRIM REAPER, MAN-APE AND SABOTAGE PLANTED A BOMB ON BOARD THE SHIP AND TRIED TO RAM THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.

MAN-APE AND JIM REAPER...? OOHHHKAY, WHERE'S THE BOMB NOW?

COAST GUARD

SPLOOSH!!

HOLY!

OVER THERE I BELIEVE.

I DO HOPE ORKA IS ALL RIGHT.

IF NOT, HE'S GONNA BE THE CATCH OF THE DAY AT LUNDY'S FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

THINK WE SHOULD CHECK OUT WHO OWNS THIS SHIP? FIND SOME CLUES AND SUCH?

COAST GUARD

TEAM! SPREAD OUT AND SEARCH THE SHIP!

I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT S.H.I.E.L.D. HAD GRIM REAPER LOCKED DOWN.

HUH. VILLAINS ESCAPING PRISON. TERRIBLY RARE.

HEY, NOT THAT I MISS HIM...

"...BUT HAS ANYONE HEARD FROM HUMBUG?"

LOOK, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS. YOU CAN HAVE THE STUPID DOOMBOT, JUST LET THE KID GO.

THE BRAT REFUSES TO LEAVE!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! CHANGE HIM BACK TO A NICE ROBOT!

UGH! I MAY HAVE TO DISPATCH HIM MYSELF IF HE INTERFERES WITH OUR PLANS...

WHAT EXACTLY IS OUR PLAN, GORILLA MAN?

NOT IN FRONT OF THE BUG, SHRUNKEN BONES.

NO, PLEASE SHARE YOUR EVIL SCHEME WITH ME. I'D LOVE TO HEAR WHAT YOU LOSERS ARE UP TO WHEN YOU'RE NOT SCARING POOR LITTLE KIDS AT THEME PARKS. I'M SURE IT'S BRILLIANT.

WE ARE IN FACT GENIUSES POISED TO LIBERATE OURSELVES FROM THE IDIOTIC LEGISLATION SO RECENTLY PASSED IN FAVOR OF EXPOSING OUR SECRET IDENTITIES.

YOU'RE AS VERBOSE AS YOU ARE HAIRY.

WHY AM I EVEN HERE? IF YOU WANTED TO KILL ME YOU'D HAVE DONE IT BY NOW.

MY DEAR HUMBUG, WE'VE ALREADY DONE SOMETHING WORSE THAN KILL YOU.

YOU LOOK SPECTACULAR, CHONDU.

I'VE JUST BEGUN TO EXPLORE YOUR BODY, BIT MEATY AROUND THE CENTER, BUT NO MATTER. I'LL ENJOY USING IT IN A SPECTACULARLY CARNAL MANNER.

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

YOU @%?#&$+?!!!

BACK ON THE CARGO SHIP.

THIS VESSEL'S POINT OF ORIGIN IS LATVERIA.

COAST GUARD

NOT COOL.

DOOM.

AS IN DOCTOR?

APPARENTLY HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHIPMENTS OF WEAPONS... OR AT LEAST WE'RE MEANT TO THINK HE IS.

GIVEN THE CLIMATE SURROUNDING COSTUMED CRIMINALS, HE'D MAKE A CONSIDERABLE PROFIT.

COAST GUARD

BUT HE'S NOT A TERRORIST. WHY WOULD HE WANT GRIM REAPER TO BLOW UP MANHATTAN, ESPECIALLY IF THIS IS HIS SOURCE OF REVENUE?

YOU'RE TRYING TO RATIONALIZE DADDY DOOM-THINK?

WELL, HE IS CONSISTENT... HE TENDS TO FAVOR WORLD DOMINATION.

COAST GUARD

SO WE FIND GRIM REAPER AND HIS PALS, SHUT DOWN THE PIPELINE AND EVERYTHING'S COOL.

YOU GOT PART OF THAT RIGHT.

PIPELINES HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF REOPENING WITH NEW PLAYERS. IF THE TRAIL GOES PAST THE REAPER WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FOLLOW IT...

TO LATVERIA? ARE YOU NUTS? DO WE GET *PAID* FOR THAT KIND OF GIG?

WE'RE SAVING *LIVES*, CAT.

%$#%... WHY DON'T WE JUST CHANGE OUR NAME TO "*HEROES FOR %*@#' FREE*"?

ONE HOUR LATER...

GOLDEN DRAGON

NO ONE HAS HEARD ANYTHING FROM HUMBUG.

HOW 'BOUT HIS TRACKING DEVICE, OTIS?

ISN'T REGISTERING.

HEY, THESE'RE KINDA TIGHT.

HMMMM, MAYBE THE KID WAS TELLING THE TRUTH AND HUMBUG'S IN OVER HIS HEAD.

DO WE REALLY *NEED* HIM?

I DON'T THINK SO.

SEND HIS MOM SOME FLOWERS... OR DOES HE HAVE A QUEEN LIKE ANTS DO?

I HOPE YOU LADIES ARE JOKING.

YEAH... JOKING... *HA HA.*

LOOK, WE NEED TO FIND GRIM REAPER AND HUMBUG CAN DO THAT BEST, BUT IN HIS ABSENCE WE'LL HAVE TO USE OTHER MEANS.

WHAT IF HE'S IN TROUBLE?

CAN I... UM, GO?

YOU'RE OUR ONLY CONNECTION TO LATVERIA AND THE BAD GUYS, EXO-SUIT BOY. SO NO.

*THE BIG HONKIN' EXO-SUIT THROWNDOWN HAPPENED LAST ISSUE. TRUST US! --EDITORS FOR HIRE

UMM... GUYS...?

HUMBUG?

I SAID THE BOY WAS CREEPY AND I STAND BEHIND IT.

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

HELP

HOOKED ON PHONICS?

CLEVER LITTLE BUG, ISN'T HE?

I'D ARGUE THAT THE BUGS ARE SMARTER AND HAVE A BETTER GRASP OF ENGLISH.

SHANG, YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF SAVING HUMBUG'S NECK FROM WHATEVER HE'S GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO. TAKE ORKA WITH YOU.

I WILL BRING HIM BACK SAFELY.

SO, THAT MEAN WE'RE GOING AFTER GRIM REAPER?

SEASONS DON'T FEAR THE REAPER...NOR DO THE WIND...

GIRLS NIGHT OUT.

DO NOT SING BLUE OYSTER CULT SONGS.

CAN WE JUST GO HIT SOMETHING ALREADY? I HAVEN'T HAD SEX OR BEEN IN A FIGHT FOR MORE THAN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS!

LATER AND ELSEWHERE...

WHY, WHY, *WHY* ISN'T THE STATUE OF LIBERTY A SMOKING BALL OF COPPER WASTE!?!

WHY DO YOU THINK? THEY STOPPED THE BOMB. IT'S BEEN ON TV ALL MORNING.

MAYBE IT WAS A BAD IDEA TO LEAVE THE HEROES FOR HIRE ALIVE ON THE BOAT. I DUNNO, THAT'S JUST ME...MAYBE I'M CRAZY.

TIME FOR PLAN B.

HAVE SOME BREAKFAST, GRIM. I'M MAKING EGG HATS.

AND PLEASE TURN DOWN THE VOLUME, WILL YOU? I HAVE A HANGOVER.

I WANT OUT OF THIS FASCIST COUNTRY.

WE ALL DO, GRIM. IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A PLAN HAS GONE WRONG. YOU NEED TO RELAX.

SHUT UP!

VERY SMOOTH, GRIM.

I DON'T MIND COOKING, BUT CLEANING'S YOUR JOB.

I DON'T CARE! I HAVE A VERY SPECIFIC PLAN AND I WANT IT EXECUTED PROFESSIONALLY!

YOU KNOW ANYONE ELSE THAT CAN BUILD EXPLOSIVES?

I SEEM TO REMEMBER THAT ALL YOUR PLANS INVOLVE BOMBS.

WELL, NOW I OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO CHANGE MY PLANS! IF THE TRAIL LEADS BACK TO US SOMEHOW, WE'RE SCREWED!

WILL YOU RELAX? WE'RE VILLAINS...WE DON'T ROLL OVER ON EACH OTHER LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA AND IRON MAN...

YOU WANT AN EGG HAT OR NOT?

CHA-BOOM!

OH, GREAT.

HI, MAN-APE! CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG BUT...

GRIM REAPER IS A RACIST AND I THOUGHT YOU TWO BROKE UP.

I'M MORE CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT GORILLA TASTES LIKE, YOU CREEPY FREAK.

HOW'D YOU FIND--?

YOUR EXO-SUIT PALS AIN'T TERRIBLY LOYAL.

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE: DON'T TRUST PEOPLE THAT DO BUSINESS WITH LATVERIA.

GRRAAHHHHHHH!

UH-OH.

ZZZZZRT!

OHHHHH, NO HE--

SSSSM!

YAAAH!

WAIT...

"WHERE'D CAT AND TARANTULA GO?"

FUDGE!

SKRNCH!

SWING!

PSSH!

YES!

THANK YOU, GOD!

IS THIS NECESSARY?

YOU READ THE FILE ON HIM.

GRIM CAN CAST ILLUSIONS, SHAPE-SHIFT, HE'S GOT TELEPORTATION, INTER-DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL, CONJURING/COMMANDING MINOR DEMONIC CREATURES KINDA POWERS, NOT TO MENTION...

MATTER RESTRUCTURING, REMOTE COMMUNICATION, REMOTE SURVEILLANCE, TRANSMUTATION, EMOTION VAMPIRISM AND HE CAN REANIMATE THE DEAD AS HIS ZOMBIE SERVANTS.

P-PLEASE... I LOST THOSE POWERS YEARS AGO... GIVE ME A BREAK...

IF YOU WANT US TO TAKE IT EASY THEN START TALKING.

WHAT'S WITH SELLING GANGS ILLEGAL TECH AND TRYING TO MAKE LIKE A TERRORIST...

M-MONEY, YOU IDIOTS! IF I'D PROVEN I COULD EXECUTE A TERRORIST ATTACK WITH AN UNTRACEABLE TRAIL, I'D BE SET FOR LIFE...

DIDN'T YOUR MOMMA EVER TELL YOU THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS THAN MONEY?

YOU LIVING IN A DREAM WORLD?

THAT'S IT--!

SKRNK!

YOU'RE NOT GONNA STICK THOSE ANTLERS UP HIS--

...BUT I WANT MY BODY BACK! SERIOUSLY, THIS ISN'T FUNNY.

STOP TALKING OR I'LL SWITCH OFF YOUR LIFE SUPPORT.

THAT'S IT! I'M KILLING HIM! ANY OBJECTIONS?

WHILE I WAS IN FAVOR OF USING HIM AS OUR MASCOT, I DO SEE THE VALIDITY OF SILENCING HIM ETERNALLY.

SUIT YOURSELF. CAN I GET A TV OR SOMETHING TO LOOK AT?

HEY RUBY, WHY DON'T YOU DO A LITTLE STRIPTEASE FOR ME?

I'LL DO NO SUCH THING, YOU WRETCHED LITTLE PERVERT HEAD.

COME ON, RUBY. SHOW US HOW YOU SEXY DANCE!

HEY, I WAS JUST JOKING! DON'T DO IT, RUBY!

GORILLA MAN, WHERE IS THE OFF SWITCH?

DO NOT TOUCH THAT BUTTON!

PLEASE, WE WOULD PREFER TO END THIS PEACEFULLY.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, SHANG-CHI.

HEY, BE CAREFUL WITH MY BODY!

ORKA, PLEASE...THIS IS A DELICATE SITUATION.

JUST GUARD HIS HEAD, SHANG!

SAY WHAT YOU WILL, BUT SOMETIMES VIOLENCE IS THE ANSWER!

I-I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.

DOOM!

ELIMINATE THE INTRUDERS!

GOOD, A ROBOT.

I WAS TIRED OF HOLDING BACK.

FOOL! YOU FACE DOOM!

ORKA, NO!!!

INITIATING DEATHRAY LAUNCH SEQUENCE...

ARE WE GONNA TALK OR ARE WE GONNA--

DIE.

#8

THE SECRET HIDEOUT OF THE NOTORIOUS VILLAIN GROUP KNOWN AS THE HEADMEN...

%$#!

EXCELLENT WORK, DOOMBOT!

NO! WHY DID YOU DO THAT?! I PROGRAMMED YOU TO BE NICE!

UNHAND ME, CHILD! YOUR TAMPERING IS UNDONE! NO ONE IMPOSES ON THE WILL OF DOOM AND LIVES...

LET'S FINISH THE REST OF THESE BUMBLING HERO--

CHOMP!

YEEARRGH!!!

HOLY--

GET IT OFF ME!

HOLD ON, DR. NAGAN.

R-RUN... I'LL HOLD THEM OFF.

WHAT DO WE DO?! OH, %$#!, ORKA!

IT... IT FEELS BAD...

YOU PASS TO THE NEXT WORLD A HERO, MY FRIEND. GO IN PEACE...

MISTY...

I THINK I FELL IN LOVE WITH MISTY...

...WILL YOU TELL HER?

THIS IS BENEATH YOU, SHANG-CHI! FACE YOUR DEATH AS A WARRIOR!

CHONDU'S RIGHT. TIME TO MEET YOUR MAKER.

QUIET!

MY BROTHER PASSES. HE SHALL DO SO IN PEACE.

IT SEEMED SILLY AT THE TIME...TO FALL IN LOVE...

NOW MAYBE I THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT...

M'BE TH MST IMPRT...

GOD...THIS IS ACTUALLY GETTING UNCOMFORTABLE.

FINISH HIM, DOOM...

COME ON, SHANG...THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR YOUR ZEN-LIKE CALM...

NO, OTIS...

IT IS NOT.

ZZZAAK!

KRSHZK

PLEASE, MY BONES ARE ACTUALLY QUITE BRITTLE--

SHANG--

CRACK!

BE CAREFUL!

SHRRK!

TRUCE, MS. TUESDAY?

NOT QUITE.

@#$%

YOU FOOL. I HAVE THE BODY OF A FULL-GROWN GORILLA! I CAN LIFT OVER 1,000--

GAAARGH!!

HURK!

%$#%?!

NEED A HAND, HUMBUG?

PUNT!

I NEED A WHOLE %$#$ING BODY, OTIS.

HOW WE DOING?

I THINK SHANG'S LOST IT...

SHANG, TAKE IT EASY! NAGAN'S HEAD IS AS WEAK AS ANY HUMAN'S...YOU COULD KILL HIM!

HA! HUMAN WEAKNESS!

SUCH IS NOT AN ISSUE WHEN YOU FACE A DOOMBOT!

I DON'T SUPPOSE IT IS.

DEATHRAY CYCLE. COMMAND: INITIATE.

INITIATING. PREPARE FOR LETHAL DISCHARGE.

EXECUTING--

GZZZ-- EXECUTING...

NOW.

N... GZZZ... N...

SNAP!

ZZBWOOOM

G-GOOD GOD...I SURRENDER, PLEASE...

W-WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

HE WASN'T A BAD GUY...IT WAS JUST HIS PROGRAM...

I COULD HAVE MADE HIM BETTER.

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL HIM.

THREE MILES EAST...

I HOPE THE GUYS MADE OUT AS WELL AS WE DID.

BECAUSE THIS WAS ONE SUCCESSFUL GIRLS' NIGHT OUT.

I DON'T KNOW...I THINK THEY ALL GOT OFF EASY FOR TRYING TO BLOW UP THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.

LET ME GUESS, YOU WANTED TO KILL ONE OF THEM.

YOU NEED TO RELAX, TARANTULA. I MEAN, DEAD OR ALIVE, WE STILL GET PAID...

WE *ARE* GOING TO GET PAID, RIGHT?

WE WERE HIRED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE JEWELRY HEISTS.

AND THE GRIM REAPER AND HIS BUDDIES WERE AT THE BOTTOM.

I'M SURE OUR CLIENT WILL BE HAPPY WITH OUR--

MISTY, IT'S ME, OTIS...HEY, DO ANY OF YOU KNOW HOW TO RE-ATTACH A HUMAN HEAD?

WHAT?

IT'S HUMBUG...

SAY NO MORE.

WELL, MISS BIOPHYSICIST?

WHAT?! I MEAN...IT'S THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE, WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS...

SIT TIGHT, OTIS...

WE'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

DOWNTOWN NEW YORK...

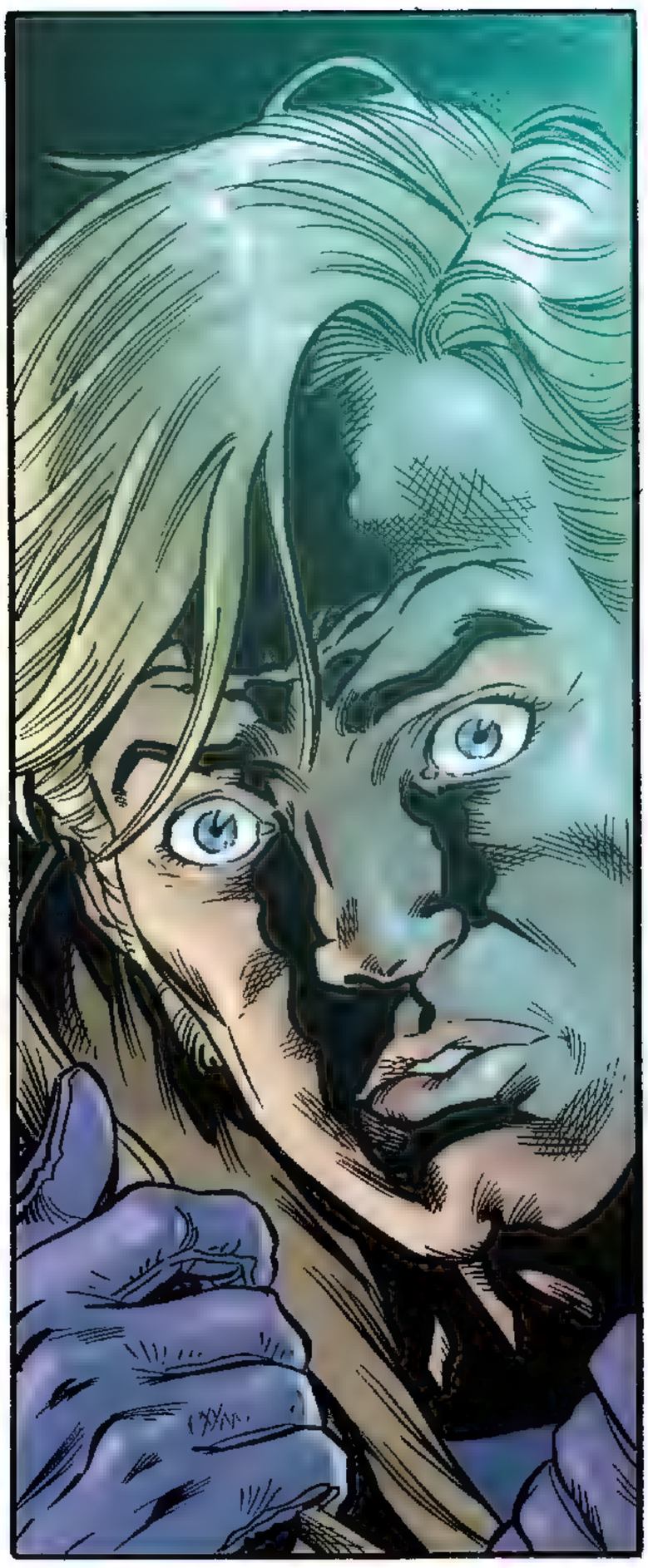
CHECKMATE.

COME IN.

GOOD, YOU'RE LOOKING LIKE YOURSELF AGAIN, PALADIN.

I'D HEARD A RUMOR YOU'D STARTED DRESSING LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA.

$#%$ YOU.
10 MILLION DOLLARS.



10 MILLION DOLLARS, FOR A SNATCH-AND-GRAB? MUST BE MY LUCKY DAY.
DON'T COUNT YOUR MONEY YET. I HAVEN'T SHOWN YOU YOUR MARK.

WE NEED A TEAM, OBVIOUSLY. IF YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE ASSEMBLED BY TOMORROW MORNING, THERE WILL BE NO CONTRACT.

DON'T WORRY.
I'VE GOT A TEAM IN MIND.

THE HEADMEN'S "FORMER" HEADQUARTERS...

MY GOD...WHAT HAPPENED?

THE ROBOT OUR YOUNG "*CLIENT*" WAS TALKING ABOUT WAS A DOOMBOT WHEN HE "*HIRED*" US.

THE HEADMEN HAD GOTTEN AHOLD OF IT AND RESTORED HIS WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND ORIGINAL PLANNING.

HE'S THE ONE THAT SMOKED ORKA.

WHERE'S THE 'BOT NOW?

SHANG-CHI TOOK CARE OF HIM.

YEAH, HE FLIPPED OUT AND "*TOOK CARE*" OF ALL OF THEM.

WHAT DO YOU THINK, "DOC?"

I DON'T KNOW, HUMBUG... THIS IS HORRIBLY COMPLICATED WORK.

P-PLEASE, I'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO COOPERATE IF YOU'D JUST PROTECT ME FROM YOUR MASTER OF KUNG FU.

COME ON, OTIS! YOU JUST LET A PERP WALK AROUND WITHOUT RESTRAINTS?

P-PLEASE, I AM NO THREAT TO YOU...THIS BODY IS FEEBLE AND WEAK...

HEY!

HEH. LET'S GO, GUYS.

SERIOUSLY, I'D BE IN BETTER SHAPE IF I'D TAKEN THE CHILD'S BODY. I'M GETTING WINDED JUST STANDING HERE...

SHUT UP!

AND IT IS HORRIBLY INADEQUATE FOR CARNAL PLEASURE...

HEE HEE.

PLEASE STOP...

OTIS, CALL OUR S.H.I.E.L.D. LINE. WE'VE GOT WAY TOO MANY VILLAINS TO HOLD...

AND SOME OF THEM NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION.

THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES...

SHANG-CHI... ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

I...I AM SORRY, MISTY.

YOUR HANDS...

BROKEN ON THE DOOMBOT. I LOST CONTROL... LET RAGE CONTROL MY ACTIONS.

THEY KILLED ORKA, SHANG. LET'S WORRY ABOUT YOU FOR NOW...

MAYBE TARANTULA CAN FIND SOMETHING IN THE LAB TO FIX YOU UP...

LATER.

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIX HUMBUG?

LOOKS LIKE IT. THE HEADMEN HAVE CRANIAL REPLACEMENT DOWN TO A SCIENCE. IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FIGURE OUT THE MACHINE.

YOU ARE WISE IN THE WAYS OF SCIENCE...I MUST SEEM BRUTISH TO YOU.

HA! YOU THINK ENLIGHTENMENT LEADS TO PACIFISM, EH? ACTUALLY I FIND IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

THE MORE I KNOW ABOUT THIS WORLD AND THE WAY IT WORKS, THE MORE VIOLENCE MAKES SENSE.

THE MORE IT *EXCITES* ME...

YOUR NAME...WHAT IS IT?

IT'S...

HEY! I'M BACK.

THAT'S IT THEN. S.H.I.E.L.D. SHOULD BE HERE ANY SECOND TO CLEAN UP!

MISTY, BEFORE ORKA... WENT, HE TOLD ME HE HAD FEELINGS FOR YOU. HE WANTED YOU TO KNOW...

AIN'T THAT A %$#@&...

I HAVEN'T HAD A DATE IN MONTHS.

CHINATOWN.

SO...

AS YOU KNOW, OVER THE LAST MONTH THERE HAVE BEEN A STRING OF HEISTS IN NEW YORK'S DIAMOND DISTRICT.

ONE WEEK AGO WE WERE HIRED ON BEHALF OF THE DIAMOND SYNDICATE TO TRACE THE ORIGIN OF THESE HEISTS.

YES, YES... AND I HAVE BROUGHT PAYMENT FOR YOUR SERVICES.

NOT SO FAST. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH.

SO...WE TRACKED THE GANG RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEISTS TO A DOWNTOWN PENTHOUSE.

ONE OF THE GANG MEMBERS SQUEALED AND LED US TO THEIR SUPPLIER...

ONLY IT TURNED OUT THAT IT WAS REALLY A TRAP, SET BY THE GRIM REAPER TO KILL THE HEROES FOR HIRE...

AND BLOW UP THE STATUE OF LIBERTY!

LUCKILY ORKA (R.I.P.) WAS ABLE TO DISPOSE OF THE BOMB AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA AND SAVE THE STATUE...

SPLITTING UP, MISTY, COLLEEN, BLACK CAT, AND THE TARANTULA WERE ABLE TO TRACK THE GRIM REAPER TO HIS HIDEOUT, WHERE HE WAS APPREHENDED AND HIS MASTER PLAN WAS FOILED.

AND THAT, KIND SIR, IS HOW THE GREAT DIAMOND HEISTS OF 2006 WERE SOLVED!

WOW. WHAT A STORY.

WHERE ARE MY DIAMONDS?

WELL, YOU SEE, WE KIND OF TURNED IN THE GANG ALREADY...AND I'M SURE THE DIAMONDS WERE FENCED BEFORE WE GOT THERE ANYWAY...

BUT WE STOPPED THE GRIM REAPER'S EVIL SCHEME... AND EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T QUITE EXPLAIN WHAT THAT WAS, I'M SURE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BAD...

GOOD DAY.

&$%#, %$&#, &$##$!!!

OH, DON'T WORRY EVERYBODY... WE'VE STILL GOT THE JAR OF CHANGE FROM THE DOOMBOT KID!

OKAY... NOW THAT JOB DIDN'T GO SO WELL, BUT WE'RE NOT IN THAT BAD'VE A SHAPE YET...

WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS ARE DOING GREAT WITHOUT ME!

PALADIN?!

I'VE BEEN DREAMING ABOUT THIS MOMENT, %$#%$#!

NOW, LET'S EVERYBODY JUST SETTLE DOWN.

SETTLE DOWN?! YOU SOLD US OUT SO YOU COULD SELL CAPTAIN AMERICA TO S.H.I.E.L.D.!

GIVE ME ONE REASON WHY WE SHOULDN'T BUST YOU RIGHT NOW.

WELL, NUMBER ONE, LIKE YOU SAID, I WAS WORKING FOR *S.H.I.E.L.D.* I'M NOT GOING TO GET "*BUSTED*" FOR ANYTHING.

NUMBER TWO, I WAS AT LEAST PRODUCING INCOME. YOU EXPECT YOUR EMPLOYEES TO STAY LOYAL WHEN YOU HAVE THEM COUNTING CHANGE?

SO WHAT, YOU CAME HERE TO GLOAT? NO RULE SAYS WE CAN'T ROUGH YOU UP A LITTLE BIT.

I'M HERE TO GIVE YOU PEOPLE A WAKE-UP CALL. WHAT THE HELL WAS THIS GRIM REAPER NONSENSE. I WOULDN'T PAY YOU FOR IT, EITHER.

I'M HERE TO OFFER YOU A JOB. A PAYING JOB.

YOU SON OF A-- YOU CAN'T JUST--

ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

EACH.

WHAT KIND OF JOB PAYS THAT KIND OF--

THIS KIND.

ANY QUESTIONS?

#9

A S.H.I.E.L.D. SCIENCE LAB.
NEW YORK CITY.

MAY I HELP YOU?

UH, WE'RE THE "*HEROES FOR HIRE*"? WE'RE HERE ABOUT A JOB?

YOU'RE PALADIN'S TEAM, THEN?

WE'RE "*HEROES FOR HIRE.*" PALADIN IS A...

...NO GOOD, LYING...

...ACQUAINTANCE.

OH WELL. I WAS HOPING HE'D BRING SILVER SABLE AND HER WILD PACK. BUT I SUPPOSE YOU'LL DO.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, HUMBUG?

I HATE LABS, COLLEEN... THEY'RE TOO CLEAN. NO BUGS TO TALK TO.

WE LOOKED THROUGH THE DOSSIER YOU GAVE PALADIN...YOU REALLY WANT TO PAY US MILLIONS TO GO DINOSAUR HUNTING?

HA! DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, YOUNG LADY. WE'RE AFTER THE HOMO HABILIS.

THE WHAT?

WE WANT THE CAVEMAN.

WHO, THIS LITTLE GUY?

QUITE. UNFORTUNATELY FROM ALL INTEL WE HAVE GATHERED HE IS ATTACHED TO HIS RATHER LARGE FRIEND THERE.

YOUR JOB WOULD BE TO EXTRACT THE HABILIS... AND THE DINOSAUR IF NECESSARY. WE HAVE THE MEANS TO HOUSE THEM BOTH HERE.

S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS STATIONED IN THE SAVAGE LAND ONLY RECENTLY ACQUIRED THOSE PHOTOGRAPHS, BUT WE HAVE ALREADY MATCHED THE EXACT CLIMATE REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN BOTH DINOSAUR AND EARLY MAMMALIAN LIFE--

SO WHAT? S.H.I.E.L.D. IS BUILDING ZOOS NOW?

THE PRE-MAN, REGARDLESS OF HIS ORIGIN, IS AN EVOLUTIONARY TIME CAPSULE. HE IS FROM A TIME BEFORE CANCER, BEFORE AIDS... BEFORE EVERY SCOURGE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

THEN WHY DOESN'T S.H.I.E.L.D. EXTRACT HIM?

HIS DNA IS WORTH MORE THAN YOU CAN COMPREHEND.

HEY...LET'S NOT TALK OURSELVES OUT OF A JOB.

S.H.I.E.L.D. IS RELUCTANT TO ASSIGN TRAINED AGENTS TO ITS SCIENCE UNITS. MONEY, HOWEVER, THEY ARE MORE THAN HAPPY TO PROVIDE.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO BENEFIT FROM IRRESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT SPENDING, YOU'LL BE READY TO DEPART FOR THE SAVAGE LAND IN TWO HOURS.

SEE? I TOLD YOU IT WAS LEGIT. ARE YOU GUYS IN OR--

OW! COME ON!

SORRY, GUYS. I SHOULD HAVE CUT HIM OFF AT "SEE?"

EASE UP, BLACK CAT.

THIS IS A TEAM DECISION, PALADIN. YOU LOST YOUR VOTE WHEN YOU SOLD US OUT FOR A SHOT AT CAPTAIN AMERICA...

YOU BROUGHT ME ALONG ON A PERSONAL FREEBIE MISSION OF GOOD WILL! WHAT KIND OF MERCENARY WOULD I BE IF I DIDN'T TRY AND MAKE SOME MONEY ON THE CASE?!

AND IF I HADN'T MADE THE S.H.I.E.L.D. CONTACT WE WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN THIS JOB...

RING RING

WHAT IS IT, OTIS.

SPEAKING OF, WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE, MISTY.

IT'S A GOOSE CHASE THROUGH A MYTHICAL LAND LOCATED IN THE HEART OF ANTARCTICA. IT'S A LOT OF MONEY, BUT IT'S OUT OF OUR LEAGUE...

MISTY, YOUR MUSTANG JUST GOT REPOED...

...AND NEW YORK WAS JUST STARTING TO WARM UP.

SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH POLE...

I CAN'T BELIEVE TARANTULA QUALIFIED TO PILOT A BOAT THIS SIZE...

YES, HER WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE IS INTIMIDATING. SHE IS LIKE NO ONE I'VE EVER MET.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S MORE UNSETTLING, SHANG...SEEING YOU SMITTEN OR WATCHING YOU STAND IN MINUS-20 DEGREE WEATHER WITHOUT A SHIRT...

ARE YOU GOING TO WATCH ME OR HELP ME TAKE INVENTORY?

I HAVE TO MAKE SURE YOUR "*INVENTORY*" DOESN'T INCLUDE ANY MORE OF THAT NERVE GAS YOU USED ON US BEFORE...

MY DEVOTION TO MY MARTIAL ART DOES NOT ALLOW ROOM TO BE "*SMITTEN*," COLLEEN.

THE COLD SERVES TO REMIND ME.

WILL YOU RELAX? I ALWAYS BEHAVE WHEN I'M BEING PAID WHAT I'M WORTH...

BUT IF YOU WANT TO WATCH ME GO TO THE BATHROOM, BE MY GUEST...

YOU MIGHT WANT TO HOLD IT, PALADIN.

I THINK WE'RE HERE.

MY GOD...IT'S MAJESTIC...

Y-YEAH.

HUMBUG, YOU SHOULD HAVE DRESSED COOLER. YOU'RE SWEATING.

AM I?

THIS PLACE IS HUGE. WE COULD BE HERE FOREVER, SEARCHING FOR OUR MARK.

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING TO THE EGGHEAD? THE CLIMATE NECESSARY FOR SUSTAINING BOTH OUR DINOSAUR AND OUR CAVEMAN IS INCREDIBLY RARE...

WHAT'S THIS?

A MIXTURE OF HUMAN, CHIMPANZEE, AND GORILLA PHEROMONES. THE LAB NERDS SWEAR IT WILL BRING OUR MONKEY-MAN RUNNING.

IF WE SPLIT UP AND SPRAY THIS EVERY 100 YARDS WE CAN BE BACK ON THE BOAT BY SUNDOWN...

THREE HOURS LATER...

YOU REALIZE THAT THE SUN ISN'T GOING TO GO DOWN FOR ANOTHER MONTH, RIGHT?

SHUT UP.

SO YOUR ESTIMATED TIME FOR THIS JOB IS ONE MONTH?

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEANT. SHUT UP.

WHY SO HOSTILE? ARE YOU UPSET THAT MISTY TEAMED YOU UP WITH SHANG?

SHUT UP.

IT'S JUST THAT HE'S THE ONE WHO STOPPED YOUR PLAN TO CAPTURE CAP AND ALL...

SHUT-- ARGH!!

SMACK

PSH.

"ALL LIFE IS PRECIOUS..."

ALL LIFE IS PRECIOUS.

DO NOT DO THAT AGAIN.

"DO NOT DO THAT AGAIN."

BANG BANG BANG BANG!!

HOW DARE--

BANG BANG

ANY LUCK CONTACTING THE ISLAND'S INSECT LIFE, HUMBUG?

HUMBUG!!

WHAT?

SORRY...IT'S JUST THERE'S SO MUCH GOING ON...IN LANGUAGES I CAN'T QUITE UNDERSTAND.

WELL, WE NEED YOU IN THE GAME...

HEY, IT'S NOT LIKE I COULD BUY A LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR THE SAVAGE LAND'S INDIGENOUS INSECTS YOU--

YOU ARE HIM!

WILL FIND YOU.

CAN HEAR YOU.

WANT YOU.

MAN MIND.

FIND YOU.

DO NOT FLEE.

WANT YOU.

NO RUNNING.

CLOSE.

HELP.

KRSH KRSH

HUM?

HUMBUG! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

VOICES... SO BIG...SO COMPLEX...

THEY'RE AFTER ME...

TRYING TO FIND ME.

HE'S FREAKING OUT, COLLEEN. YOU OKAY?

YEAH, EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT I SMELL LIKE THE SEXIEST MONKEY-WOMAN IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW...

BUT I GUESS IT COULD BE...

...WORSE?

GASP!

HUMBUG, SNAP OUT OF IT! CONJURE UP A SWARM OF BEES OR SOMETHING!

C-CAN'T... THEY'LL HEAR ME...

COME FOR ME...

WHO?! SOMETHING WORSE THAN WATCHING A PACK OF BLOODTHIRSTY APES *KING KONG* COLLEEN?!

FINE, DAMMIT! YOU THINK THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE HAD TO BEAT MEN OFF WITH A STICK?!

THUNK

HOMO HABILIS...

LOOK AT THAT, COLLEEN...

I TOLD YOU YOU'D HAVE TO LEAVE NEW YORK TO FIND A GOOD MAN...

SPAPT

NO...

I WILL FIGHT BUT I WILL NOT SLAUGHTER.

MAY MY DEATH BE HONORABLE...

ENOUGH!

Y-YOU ENJOYED THAT, TARANTULA... THE KILLING? YOU--

YOU DISGUST ME!

IT'S OKAY TO BE EXCITED, SHANG...

OUR FRIENDS...

THEY'RE NOT HERE...

WE SHOULD--

YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT.

I...

HEY, DOESN'T YOUR BOYFRIEND HAVE A BIG RED DINOSAUR FOR OCCASIONS LIKE THIS?

I GUESS WE'RE NOT AT THE STAGE WHERE I MEET THE FAMILY...

DON'T TALK TO THE BUGS OR THEY'LL GET ME...

DON'T TALK TO THE BUGS OR THEY'LL GET ME...

NOOOOOOOO

CHOMP

HELP!!

FOUND YOU.
WANT YOU.
HEARD YOU.
MAN MIND.
FOUND YOU.
DO NOT FLEE.
WANT YOU.
NO RUNNING.
CLOSE.
WHAT IS--
RMMMMBLE
THAT--
SOUND?

HUMBUG...

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO

NO--

NO!! LET ME GO!

THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.

HE'S GONE.

WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS THIS?

FINE. SLEEP.

MORE FOR ME.

"...BUT IF THERE'S ONE THING YOU'LL REGRET DOIN' IN THE SAVAGE LAND...

"...IT'S PASSIN' UP A MEAL."

#10

THE SAVAGE LAND...

YOU ARE HIM.

MAN-MIND.

FOUND YOU.

CANNOT FLEE.

WANT YOU.

NO RUNNING.

OURS NOW.

MAN-MIND.

MUST SUSTAIN THE WORLD-HIVE.

STRENGTH CONSUMES.

THE WEAK ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL.

THE WEAK MUST SERVE THE STRONG.

THE WEAK MUST BE SACRIFICED.

ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HUMBUG IS HIS COSTUME...I THINK THE BUGS ATE THE REST.

HEY! WATCH IT, MONKEY-MAN!

I-IT'S OKAY, MISTY. I THINK HE CAN SENSE MY SADNESS...

YEAH, RIGHT...

MISTY, PLEASE...CAN YOU BE A LITTLE MORE SENSITIVE? HE'S *DEAD*.

I'M JUST ASSESSING THE SITUATION, COLLEEN. IF THERE'S NO REASON TO SEARCH FOR HIM, WE SHOULD GO--

I'M SURE IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE HALF-GALLON OF MONKEY SEX HORMONES YOU SPILLED ON YOURSELF.

WHAT? YOU WANT US TO FOLLOW YOU?

COME ON! *WE'RE* SUPPOSED TO BE EXTRACTING *HIM!*

HE'S *PROTECTIVE* OF ME...WE MIGHT STILL BE IN DANGER.

ARE YOU CRAZY? HE'S PROBABLY TAKING YOU TO HIS LOVE NEST!

COME ON, MISTY! KEEP UP!

WHAT, I DON'T GET A RIDE?

WHOA! WHOA! WHOA!

URK!

THUD!!

OH, MY GOD! MISTY!

I'M OKAY! YOU DON'T BREATHE A WORD OF THIS TO THE REST OF THE TEAM, YOU UNDERSTAND?

NO, MISTY, I'M TALKING ABOUT--

HOLY @#$%!!

I-IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?

OKAY, JUST RELAX. I THINK THEY'RE FRIENDS...

HMMPH! HMMPH!

I THINK HE WANTS TO *INTRODUCE* US...

THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE INSEPARABLE...

IT'LL PROBABLY BE EASIER TO GET THE MONKEY IF WE BRING HIS FRIEND ALONG.

YOU SHOULD CHECK IT OUT.

YOU'RE THE MONKEY-WHISPERER! WORK YOUR MAGIC ON THAT LIZARD AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

ME?! ARE YOU CRAZY?

GRRRRR!

MAYBE IT WAS A FRIENDLY "GRRRR."

"GRRRR"?

GYAAARRRR!!

HOLY @#$%!!

THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY!

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS...WE SHOULD BE SEARCHING FOR OUR FRIENDS.

JUST LET ME FRESHEN UP...

I WORKED UP QUITE A SWEAT SAVING YOU FROM THOSE SABRE-TOOTHED CANINES. WELL, THAT AND--

WE MUST LEAVE NOW, TARANTULA!

"TARANTULA"? I HAD YOU WHISPERING SWEET "MARIAS" FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO...

I-I LET MY PASSIONS GET THE BETTER OF ME...

THAT SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING A LOT LATELY. I LIKE IT...

I'VE MADE A MISTAKE. PLEASE DO NOT SPEAK OF IT AGAIN.

OOH, LIKE A SECRET AFFAIR? I LIKE--

NO!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?!

I HAVE UNBALANCED MY *CHI*...IT MUST NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

FINE, WHATEVER...

"LET'S MOVE."

YOU SHOULDN'T TRY TO GET UP...

OOOOOH...

WHERE...

I LOST TRACK OF SHANG AND TARANTULA RIGHT BEFORE THOSE BUGS CHASED US OVER A CLIFF.

I USED ONE OF THE CREEPY-CRAWLIES TO BREAK MY FALL. YOU SHOULD TRY HIM, HE TASTES PRETTY GOOD...

SHUT UP, PALADIN...

I'M FINE. JUST A LITTLE...

SNIFF! SNIFF!

WHOA! EASY THERE!

LIGHT... HEADED...

YOU GOT PRETTY BANGED UP IN THE FALL... I'VE GOT YOU ALL PATCHED UP BUT YOU NEED TO TAKE IT EASY.

COME ON... HAVE SOME FOOD.

O-OKAY...

TH- THANKS...

FOR THE FOOD.

AND FOR PATCHING ME UP.

WELL, DON'T THANK ME YET...IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE DRESSED A CHEST WOUND SO I MIGHT HAVE GONE A LITTLE OVERBOARD...

CHEST WOUND? WAIT A MINUTE...

THESE BANDAGES ARE *UNDER* MY COSTUME...

YOU SLIMEBALL!

HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!

YOU TOOK MY CLOTHES OFF WHILE I WAS ASLEEP?!

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF, PRINCESS!

+URK!+

THE WEAK HAVE DIED FOR YOU.

YOU ARE STRONG.

JOIN THE HIVE-MIND.

MAN-MIND IS WEAK.

DRINK.

HIVE-MIND IS IN OUR ESSENCE.

DRINK.

DRINK.

JOIN THE HIVE-MIND.

DRINK.

KNOW OUR HISTORY.

DRINK.

NO RUNNING.

HIVE-MIND OVERTAKES YOU.

FEEL THE VOID.

THE VOID OF SPACE.

HIVE-LIFE TRAVELING THROUGH THE COSMOS ON DEAD-ROCK.

HIVE-LIFE FALLING ON THE EARTH-HIVE.

WE FEED ON THE GREEN THINGS.

THEN THE RUNNING THINGS.

WE ARE THE MASTERS OF THE PLANET.

ALL LIFE FEEDS US.

THEN THE MAN-FOOD ARRIVES.

NOT CONTENT TO LIVE AND DIE. NOT CONTENT TO BE EATEN.

THEY MAKE TROUBLE FOR US.

THEY CUT THE SACRED BONDS OF THE EARTH-HIVE.

THEY CREATE THE GREEN ONE.

THE GREEN ONE WITH THE POWER TO TRAVEL THE COSMOS.

MAN-FOOD HAS IMPERILED OUR EARTH.

THE GREEN ONE WHO RETURNS WITH OUR ANCESTORS.

ANCESTORS WHO THREATEN THE EARTH-HIVE.

YOU, THE MAN-FOOD WITH THE HIVE-MIND. *YOU* MUST STOP IT.

WHERE *YOU* GOIN', MONKEY MAN!? TELL YOUR DINOSAUR TO CHILL OUT!

?

WAIT... HE'S TURNING BACK!

WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?! YOU TRYING TO GET US KILLED?!

?

LEAVE HIM ALONE, MISTY... THE DINOSAUR WAS ATTACKING MOON-BOY TOO.

AND I THINK I SEE WHY.

THIS JUST GOT COMPLICATED.

!

NOPE, IT JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT SIMPLER. WE DITCH THE DINO AND TAKE THE MONKEY.

BUT, MISTY...THEY'RE FRIENDS.

OH, NO! YOU'VE GOT THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE, COLLEEN! THAT LOOK YOU GET WHEN YOU FIND A STRAY KITTEN!

YOU HEARD THE S.H.I.E.L.D. GUYS! THIS MONKEY'S DNA COULD HOLD THE KEY TO CURING EVERY DISEASE IN THE WORLD.

SHHHHH! YOU'RE CONFUSING HIM!

MOON-BOY... I'VE GOT TO GO HOME. BACK TO NEW YORK. YOU LIKE ME, RIGHT? YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO GO WITHOUT YOU, WOULD YOU?

?

NO, MOON-BOY... HE CAN'T COME. HE'S GOT TO TAKE CARE OF HIS EGGS.

YEAH, WAIT A MINUTE! "HIS" EGGS? HOW IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

I DON'T KNOW... REPTILES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SWITCH GENDERS, EVEN IMPREGNATE THEMSELVES.

HEY, I'VE SEEN *JURASSIC PARK* TOO, ALRIGHT?

OKAY, YOU KNOW WHAT, MISTY? THIS IS A DELICATE SITUATION...

"FIGHTING EACH OTHER ISN'T GOING TO SOLVE ANYTHING!"

#!%@ING JERK!

HAK!

THAT FULFILLS MY "LADIES FIRST" RULE...

OKAY, YOU GOT ME...

NOW LET'S SEE HOW YOU LIKE IT!

THAT IS ENOUGH.

WAIT!

GRRRK!

GO ON, TALK! TELL EVERYONE HOW YOU FELT ME UP WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS!

GURGLE

PALADIN.

HEY, LOOSEN UP A LITTLE, SHANG...YOU'RE GOING TO CHOKE HIM OUT...

grrk...

HA HA! GOOD!

LET GO!!

WHAT THE HELL IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?!

GASP!

RUMBLE

RUMBLE GUMBLE RUMBLE

WHAT IS THAT?!

GET DOWN!

NO.

GET UP. IT'S TIME TO LEAVE.

:WHIMPER:

IT'S OKAY... YOU'LL BE WITH ME. YOUR FRIEND NEEDS TO BE ALONE WITH HIS EGGS...

EEEE EEEE

EEEEE EEEEE EEEEE!!

MISTY... HE'S FREAKING OUT! DO SOMETHING.

I ALREADY DID. I SEDATED THE MONKEY, IN CASE HE HAD SECOND THOUGHTS. MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE...

OF COURSE IT WAS, MISTY! HE TRUSTED ME! YOU MADE ME INTO A LIAR!

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I THOUGHT HE'D GO DOWN QUIETLY. HIS SCREAMING PROBABLY CARRIED FOR MILES.

OH, YEAH. THAT'S BAD TOO.

COME ON, MISTY!

N-NO.

I'M NOT LEAVING OUR MARK!

YOU'RE GOING TO GET US...

KILLED.

ARE WE DEAD?

NO.

HUMBUG! YOU'RE ALIVE?!

HURRY. THE REPTILE IS ENRAGED. WE CANNOT HOLD IT FOR LONG.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL US TWICE!

GRRRRR!

IS HE OKAY?

HE'LL BE FINE! HE'S JUST A LITTLE GROGGY.

EEP?

!

GYAARRRGH

HMMMPH!

AIIEEEEEEEEEE!

ROAAARRRR!

RAAARRR!

RAAAAARRR!!

EEP! EEP! EEP! SOB

HUMBUG, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU...YOUR EYES...

THERE IS NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, MISTY. WE MUST RETURN TO NEW YORK.

THE INSECTS OF THIS ISLAND HAD MUCH TO TELL ME. NEW YORK IS IN DANGER. WE MUST LEAVE NOW.

YOU GOT SOMETHING TO TELL ME, YOU BETTER START TALKING...

RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRR!!!!!

THAT SOUNDS HORRIBLE. WHEN'S THAT LIZARD GOING TO SHUT UP?

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE CAN STILL HEAR IT. ARE WE SURE WE DID THE RIGHT THING HERE?

WE GOT THE MARK. WE'RE GETTING PAID. WHAT'S THERE TO BE CONFUSED ABOUT?

EEP! EEP! EEP! SOB

IT'S OKAY. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE NO ONE HURTS YOU. THAT'S A PROMISE.

HEADS UP EVERYONE!

WE LEAVE. NOW.

MISTY, I DON'T THINK MOON-BOY WANTS TO GO TO NEW YORK.

WELL, THAT'S GOOD.

BECAUSE IF HALF OF WHAT HUMBUG SAYS IS TRUE, NEW YORK ISN'T GOING TO BE THERE WHEN WE GET BACK.

NEXT: WORLD WAR HULK

MISTY KNIGHT. COLLEEN WING. BLACK CAT. SHANG-CHI. TARANTULA. HUMBUG.

MARVEL'S STRANGEST TEAM OF HEROES FIND THEMSELVES TRAPPED IN THE HULL OF A SHIP WITH A BOMB AS THE GRIM REAPER PLANS TO BLOW UP THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AND TAKE THE HEROES FOR HIRE DOWN WITH IT! BUT WHY? WHAT NEFARIOUS PLAN COULD HE HAVE UP HIS SLEEVE? HE'S EVIL, SO DOES IT MATTER? HE HAS TO BE STOPPED! ALSO, SOMEONE DIES! NO KIDDING. AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, HERE COMES THE RETURN OF VILLAINS NO ONE ASKED FOR: THE HORRIFIC HEADMEN HAVE A SPECIAL SURPRISE FOR THE HAPLESS HUMBUG!

PLUS: THE HEROES ARE OFFERED A MARK THAT WILL MAKE THEM RICH, BUT IT COMES WITH CONDITIONS... 1) THEY HAVE TO WORK WITH THE TREACHEROUS PALADIN, 2) THEY HAVE TO TRAVEL TO THE SAVAGE LAND, AND 3) THEY'RE HUNTING A TYRANNOSAURUS REX!

COLLECTING *HEROES FOR HIRE #6-10* – WRITTEN BY **JUSTIN GRAY** & **JIMMY PALMIOTTI** AND **ZEB WELLS,** AND ILLUSTRATED BY **AL RIO** AND **CLAY MANN.**

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MARVEL